Design Resource

Ganesha Idol Making

Pen, Maharashtra
by
Anurag Mackwan and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:
https://www.dsource.in/resource/ganesha-idol-making

1. History of Idol Making in Pen
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Delivery Process
5. Links
6. Contact Details

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History of Idol Making in Pen

Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed God, is one of the most adored deities for Hindusim, also known as Ganpati or Vinayaka. Lord Ganesha is the God of wisdom, prosperity, good fortune, and the destroyer of evils, and he is worshipped in most households without divisions or caste, wealth, or creed coming in the way. Due to all these qualities, he is also known as Vighnaharta. And the day of Ganesh Chaturthi is called Vinayaka Chaturthi. The festival honoring Ganesha is the Ganesh Chaturthi that can go up to 10 days. It is celebrated fervently in most parts of India due to its popularity as a God for all humans. For Maharashtra, it is one of the main festivals.

Ganesha Chaturthi is celebrated by installing idols of Lord Ganesha in households, temples, town squares, or pandals and worshipped for ten days. At the end of 10 days, the idols are immersed in water to denote the rebirth of God. These idols are coming in all sizes and shapes according to the accommodating ability of the worshippers. They are made from clay and Plaster of Paris (PoP). Still, the idol makers get less recognition for crafting these beautiful idols. They work all year-round to make these idols and supply them to metro cities. During this project, I was exposed to the various processes involved in making these idols, the lives of the workers, and the beauty of the whole process.

Ganesha idols kept for drying.

Ideols in process of colouring.

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Pen and Idol making

Pen is small town between Mumbai and Pune in the Raigad district of Maharashtra, famous for making Ganesha idols, having a history of over 100 years old. 1t started with the Freedom fighting movement of India when Ganesh Chaturthi was popularized and has carried on all these years, becoming an industry with exports all over India as well as to the US and the UK.

The people of Pen scarted making Ganesha idols when it became a public domain of worship in the 1890's. There are about 1.5 lakh idol-making factories in Pen taluka where more than 2 lakh people are employed around the year. The Ganesha idols were initially made out of clay, brought from Bhavnagar and then transported to Mumbai to be sold at cheap prices. Slowly, Plaster of Paris started to be used and the real boom happened in the 1970's with the opening of the Thane creek and transportation made easier. The people of Pen make idols the whole year round, taking a break only during the Ganapati festival for 10 days.

Pen railway station.

Ganesh Kala Kendra, idol-making factory.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Tools:

• **Brush:** It is used to clean the surface of the Idols.

• **Chisel/Knives:** Chisel is used to remove unwanted parts from the idols, and knives are used to detail some features or its flat surface to smooth out any surface to give that polished look.

• **Paint Brush:** They are used from shading to every detail of the idol.

Paint brush.

Knife used for detailing.

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Raw Materials:

• **Plaster of Paris (PoP.):** The PoP idols are not easy to make, but as a material, it is sturdier and lighter and can be used to make idols up to 5 feet in height.

• **Rubber Mould:** It is durable, more accurate with the impression and details, and can be used to cast more than 500 idols.

• **Katha(Natural Fibers):** It helps to increase the stability in more giant idols.

• **Powdered colors / Carnelln Colors:** Powdered colors are used for shading, and bright colors are used for detailing.

Idol removed from mould.

Artist preparing mould.

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Making Process

Process of Making PoP Idols

Casting

When the clay was used for idol making, it was environmentally less harmful than PoP. It is a white powder used for casting idols. A proper mixture of PoP is prepared and poured in mould to shape the idol, and natural fiber (Katha) is used for adding strength to the substance. The body of the mould is rubber which is kept inside the original mould. Once set, the idol is removed from mould, and is painted with white primer to paint.

Mold is filled with a paste of PoP.

Ganesha idol removed from mold.

Detailing work is going on.

Idol after detailing.

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All idols are kept for sun-drying before painting.

Painting

Once the mould has been opened, the hands that are made separately are attached to the idol's body. The painting process begins with the coat of primer, after which the Ganesha is painted in skin color with a fairer tone. The clothes and other designs are also painted on or embellished. At last, the eyes are painted, sometimes by women or girls, giving it a feminine touch.

Artist coloring cloths of the idol.

First coat of color.

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Delivery Process

Once the idols have been detailed, a coat of varnish is applied to keep the shine. They are then packed and kept aside for storage. The idols are packed airtight to avoid fungus. (since it's made of clay/ PoP). Only after receiving the order, the idols are unpacked, and the final gold or silver paints are applied and are loaded into trucks to be shipped off or delivered.

Unfinished Ganesha idols kept in the rack.

Ganesha idol is ready to go.

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Links

Links and References

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This Project was done by Anurag Mackwan, M. Des. Student at IDC, IIT Bombay.

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